United Nations S/PV.6290

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6290th meeting

Monday, 22 March 2010, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Issoze-Ngondet	(Gabon)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Long Zhou
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Mugoya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2010/127)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

10-28239 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2010/127)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ayoob (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2010/147, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Turkey.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2010/127, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall now give the floor to those delegations who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): As Turkey is the country that coordinated the discussion on the draft resolution, I am pleased to submit the draft resolution to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). It is our sincere hope that the Council will reaffirm its unwavering support for UNAMA by adopting the draft resolution unanimously.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Council will now proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution (S/2010/147) before it.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, France, Gabon, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*spoke in French*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1917 (2010).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Security Council has just unanimously adopted an important resolution on extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for a further 12-month period. This decision of the Security Council addresses a range of Afghan problems and enhances the central role played by the United Nations in coordinating international efforts to achieve a post-conflict settlement and social and economic rehabilitation in Afghanistan.

During the discussions on the resolution, the Russian delegation was able to ensure that it reflected the difficult realities in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the challenges arising therefrom, both for the Afghan Government and for UNAMA and the international community as a whole. The resolution reflects the concern of the Security Council regarding the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan due to the growing terrorist activities of the Taliban and Al-Qaida. We note, in that regard, that there is a growing link between the terrorists in that country and drug traffickers.

Particular attention is given in the resolution to the challenge facing the international community in

terms of achieving national reconciliation in Afghanistan. We support the ongoing political and reconciliation processes there, but it must be understood that these must not hinder the process of establishing lasting stability in the country or contravene Security Council resolutions, including on the effective implementation of the sanctions regime against the Taliban and Al-Qaida.

We reiterate that dialogue is possible only with those who have laid down their arms, recognized the Government and Constitution of Afghanistan, and broken their links with Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups. In particular, concerns persist with regard to the production and illegal traffic of drugs in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. There is no doubt today that the Afghan drug trade represents a direct and serious threat to international peace and security. Therefore, we must neutralize collectively, and use all available means to do so.

In this regard, we note with concern the information in the media about the intention of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan to cease destroying poppy fields, including in those territories that have been liberated from the Taliban.

How can we overcome the Taliban's military potential when it continues to obtain financial resources from the illegal drug trade? We are absolutely convinced that ISAF and the anti-terrorist coalition must, on the contrary, continue actively and decisively to address the drug threat emanating from Afghanistan and to cooperate with the Afghan Government on the issue. That is the only way to build upon what has been achieved militarily. Such an approach will make a real contribution to the long-term stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan and the region. Any attempt to bring the Taliban onboard would be a grave mistake.

We believe that the resolution and, more important, an enhanced coordinating role for UNAMA in Afghanistan, will make a practical contribution to meeting the current challenges in that country, including in the anti-drug area.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6291

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6291st meeting

Monday, 22 March 2010, 10.45 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Issoze-Ngondet	(Gabon)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Du Xiaocong
	France	Mr. Bonne
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Mugoya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Fourth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2010/135)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

10-28245 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Fourth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2010/135)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Davies (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Von der Schulenburg to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. John McNee, Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Canada.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. McNee to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2010/135, which contains the fourth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg and Mr. John McNee. I give the floor to Mr. von der Schulenburg.

Mr. von der Schulenburg: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to introduce the fourth report (S/2010/135) of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). As members of the Council have the full report before them, let me here only highlight recent developments in relation to the three critical issues for Sierra Leone's peace and stability that are regularly reviewed by this Council: youth unemployment, illicit drug trafficking and corruption. Let me also introduce, for the first time, a fourth issue for future reference and review: the 2012 elections. At the end, I would like to make three brief additional points.

With respect to fighting youth unemployment, despite the magnitude and political significance of this social problem, relatively little progress has been made. Over the past two years, there have been many plans and assessments, but they have resulted in relatively few tangible programmes that would significantly impact the lives of a sizable number of young people. I believe that the responsibility for this must be equally shared by the Government and its international development partners.

Largely as a result of the recent visit of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to Sierra Leone, the relevant Government ministries and all relevant development partners have come together over the past few days and agreed to develop one integrated national programme in support of creating employment opportunities for young people in various economic sectors. On the Government side, this integrated national employment programme will be led by Sierra

Leone's Youth Commissioner and include a number of line ministries and national authorities; on the international side, the programme will include technical and financial support from the World Bank, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the European Community. The joint outline for this integrated programme will be presented to the Peacebuilding Commission on Friday this week.

This will be only the second time that development partners have agreed with the Government on one joint programme in a crucial area for peacebuilding, and I would like to stress here the important role that the PBC can play, and indeed has played, in rallying international support behind a critical development issue.

With regard to fighting illicit drug trafficking, over the past six months tangible progress has been made in the fight illicit drug trafficking. The Government has established the Joint Drug Interdiction Task Force, which has now begun its work. With the help of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and in accordance with the West Africa Coast Initiative, the Task Force will now be upgraded to a transnational crime unit. UNODC and UNIPSIL's Police Unit coordinate international assistance coming from the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and Italy, making this an example of international cooperation for other countries in the subregion. Sierra Leone's model character in building strong institutions to fight illicit drug trafficking and other international crime was underlined during a recent conference that brought together ministers from Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia in Freetown under the leadership of Antonio Costa, Director General of UNODC.

Closely linked to fighting international crime is the urgent need to beef up coastal security to combat illicit maritime drug trafficking, illegal fishing and the beginnings of human trafficking and piracy. In October of last year, the PBC launched an appeal for two decommissioned 30-metre patrol vessels, one for Sierra Leone and one for Liberia. We still hope that we will be successful with this appeal, as that would allow these two countries to work together in fighting a common threat to their peace and development. Such bilateral cooperation could form the nucleus for wider regional cooperation that would not only benefit the security of West Africa, but would also help improve the security in Europe and other countries bordering the Atlantic.

With regard to fighting corruption, over the past few months Sierra Leone has taken some unprecedented bold steps in fighting corruption. A string of arrests and convictions on corruption charges have taken place that not only concentrated on lower-ranking officials, but that also targeted senior Government officials and cabinet ministers, including close political associates of the President. In January, the Director of the National Revenue Authority was suspended following an investigation by the Anti-corruption Commission; on 11 March, the former Minister of Health was sentenced to five years in prison on corruption charges; and, on 15 March, the Permanent Secretary and the Minister of Fisheries were indicted on corruption charges and relieved of their duties. The last case, in particular, is of great political significance, as the indicted Minister of Fisheries has a strong following within the governing party, the All People's Congress, and played a crucial role in securing the President's party nomination for the 2007 elections.

Closely connected to the issue of corruption is the need for the proper management of the country's rich mineral and natural resources. A recently concluded contract on mining iron ore has raised considerable criticism and concerns among knowledgeable experts. Sierra Leone's newly enacted mining law should apply to all mining contracts, and I urge the Government to fully comply with the requirements of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. The United Nations stands ready to provide all necessary legal advice and technical support to help protect Sierra Leone from being unfairly taken advantage of while seeking foreign investments for its development.

With regard to preparing for the elections, in 2012 Sierra Leone will hold three important elections: presidential, parliamentary and local. All internal and international observers agree that these elections will pose some very difficult and complex challenges for the country and that special efforts will be required by all stakeholders to ensure that these elections are fair, transparent and free from violence. Unfortunately, politics in Sierra Leone have become increasingly ethnic-based and the country is today largely divided North-South along tribal and political loyalties. Recent

by-elections would indicate that this trend is further deepening.

For these reasons, we have agreed with the Government to start the process of preparing for the 2012 elections early. An election needs assessment team has recently visited Sierra Leone and will be followed by an election programming mission to develop the required technical and financial assistance package. In parallel, we are engaging in a series of multi-party talks with the aim of identifying and mitigating major political, economic and social problem areas that could negatively impact the conduct of the 2012 elections. The joint communiqué that was signed by political parties a year ago forms the basis of this dialogue. In the dialogue, we have also taken up more sensitive issues such as ethnic loyalties in party politics, the winner-takes-all syndrome and political party financing.

Allow me to make here three additional points. First, today we are less worried that the situation in neighbouring Guinea will spill over into Sierra Leone. However, with the situation in Guinea improving, we now have to think more about taking a regional approach to peacebuilding and peace consolidation. In this context, the Mano River Union is of great interest to us, as it brings together four West African countries that have either come out of civil wars or that are in the process of ending internal conflicts.

Secondly, so far we have not been successful in raising the necessary financial resources to implement our peacebuilding strategy, the Joint United Nations Vision. This poses fundamental credibility issues for us; ultimately, the lack of funding could even jeopardize our new approach to peacebuilding. The additional funding that we are seeking to mobilize through our multi-donor trust fund is only $200 million. In other words, the additional funding required for four years of peacebuilding would be equivalent to the costs of only four months of the previous peacekeeping operation back in 2004. In this context, I would like to thank the French Ambassador for having taken up this key issue in the Security Council debate last month. I hope that the Council will continue to debate this important issue and consider not only the institutional aspects of such a transition from peacekeeping, but also its financial implications.

Thirdly, I feel that Sierra Leone is a good example of why the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office are so important to what we as an integrated peacebuilding mission want to achieve on the ground. I would like to thank in particular the chair of the PBC's Sierra Leone configuration, Ambassador John McNee, and his colleagues from the Canadian mission, for their unwavering support. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representatives of Liberia, Poland, Peru and the Republic of Korea — and, of course, Ambassador Mayr-Harting of Austria, who is present — for having taken the trouble of travelling all the way to Sierra Leone despite their busy schedules. Let me also recognize the excellent work that is being done by Judy Cheng-Hopkins and her team of the Peacebuilding Support Office. We now feel truly supported.

Finally, but most importantly, I would like to thank the President of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma, and his colleagues in the Government, members of the opposition and indeed all Sierra Leoneans for their support of the work of UNIPSIL and the United Nations country team. Any success that we have is ultimately only their success.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Von der Schulenburg for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. McNee.

Mr. McNee: It is a great pleasure to participate in the Security Council's consultations in my capacity as Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Last week, we returned from visiting Sierra Leone with a PBC delegation consisting of the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of Austria, the Czech Republic, the Republic of Korea, Liberia and Peru. The size of this delegation, with all of its members at the level of permanent representative, amply demonstrates the international community's interest in Sierra Leone.

As I indicated in my last briefing, the Sierra Leone configuration of the PBC has aligned its engagement with the peacebuilding priorities in Sierra Leone's Agenda for Change and decided to focus on good governance, youth employment and illicit drug trafficking. The recent visit provided an opportunity to take stock of progress and consider the Peacebuilding Commission's future contribution in these areas. The delegation's discussions with President Koroma, national and district officials, political parties, civil society, youth and the diplomatic corps underlined the progress made in recent years, highlighted major

challenges, and provided insight into current political and societal dynamics.

The situation in Sierra Leone remains calm. Important steps have been taken to follow up on the joint communiqué signed by the major political parties in March, 2009. The Independent Review Panel into the causes of the political violence has started work. With support from the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone and the United Nations Development Programme, the Political Parties Registration Commission has also engaged with the political parties to foster constructive dialogue and mitigate the possibility of politically motivated violence. Campaigns to promote tolerance have also been conducted outside Freetown and with the youth wings of the political parties.

But notwithstanding that progress, the promotion of inclusive democratic politics is becoming increasingly important. The meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission's delegation with the political parties revealed significant divisions. Mutual trust and inter-party dialogue remain limited. The trend towards growing regional and ethnic polarization, as well as increasing politicization of paramount chieftaincy elections, is cause for some concern. Similarly, isolated incidents of political violence, most recently in Tongo Fields, illustrate the potential for further instability. As the 2012 general elections approach and political stakes rise, the temptation to depart from peaceful and inclusive politics will also increase. All political actors must continue to follow up on the joint communiqué and work towards a more tolerant and cooperative form of politics.

Progress on peacebuilding will help buttress those efforts. With respect to good governance, Sierra Leone should be commended for its efforts to combat corruption. The suspension and removal of three cabinet ministers over the last year sends a strong signal. The Anti-Corruption Commission also continues to use its independence and authority to prosecute graft, improve public systems and conduct outreach. Sierra Leone's rise in the Transparency International Index is a concrete sign of this success. Nonetheless, corruption remains a serious problem throughout Sierra Leonean society, not in the least due to its inhibiting effects on foreign direct investment.

Sierra Leone has also improved other aspects of governance. Decentralization is bringing public services to districts outside Freetown and enhancing the responsibility of local governments in matters of national development. Critical work is under way to improve the capacity of the Sierra Leone police, particularly with respect to public disturbances and drug interdiction. The central importance of a trusted, capable and adequately resourced police force ahead of the 2012 elections cannot be overemphasized.

Youth unemployment is an issue requiring special attention. One third of Sierra Leone's population is between 15 and 35 years of age. Many idle youth are concentrated in urban areas, unable to find jobs and frustrated by social marginalization. That clearly represents a latent risk of political instability.

Both the Government and its international partners are moving to address the challenge. The Parliament of Sierra Leone passed the National Youth Commission Act in December 2009, and the Government is in the process of establishing the Commission as a focal point for youth policy. A sectoral working group involving key Government departments and international partners is also working to enhance employment creation. Following constructive discussions during the delegation's visit, the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission will meet on March 26 to identify outstanding needs and consider how to support this welcome and growing momentum.

Drug trafficking is a third area of concern. Sierra Leone has developed an integrated approach that is a model for the region. It is also a key participant in the West Africa Coast Initiative, and it hosted a ministerial-level conference in Freetown in February 2010. The meeting reiterated the regional commitment to the regional action plan on drug trafficking of the Economic Commission of West African States and considered the operationalization of transnational crime units in each of the pilot countries. Sierra Leone is in the process of transforming its Joint Drug Interdiction Task Force into a transnational crime unit. While these efforts are commendable, more support is needed to ensure that the subregion has the necessary capacity and resources to combat drug trafficking and organized crime.

In our view, Sierra Leone is a multilateral success story, and Sierra Leoneans have made remarkable progress. The United Nations presence has also gradually transformed itself from a major peacekeeping

operation into the current Integrated Peacebuilding Office. The remaining peacebuilding priorities represent the final obstacles before the country proceeds to long-term development.

It would be a mistake, however, to underestimate those obstacles. Sierra Leone requires continued attention and assistance, particularly in the period prior to the 2012 elections. International partners provided a welcome indication of their continued support at the Consultative Group meeting held in London last November. Nonetheless, more is needed, especially with respect to filling specific gaps. In-kind contributions of patrol vessels or police vehicles would enhance Sierra Leone's ability to monitor its maritime borders and manage internal tensions. Financial contributions to the United Nations multi-donor trust fund in support of the Agenda for Change and the United Nations joint vision for Sierra Leone would enable much-needed peacebuilding efforts to take place. That funding would also directly reinforce the excellent and innovative work carried out by Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone and the entire United Nations family.

The integrated approach adopted by the United Nations in Sierra Leone deserves the international community's strongest support. It is a successful model of how national and international actors, including the Security Council and Peacebuilding Commission, can work together to build sustainable peace after even the most devastating conflict. The international community must ensure that this remains the case. It would be a great shame if complacency at these later stages of peace consolidation undermined the considerable progress made to date. For this reason the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission remains fully committed to supporting Sierra Leone as it moves towards long-term, sustainable development.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Davies (Sierra Leone): Permit me, Mr. President, to extend, on behalf of my delegation, my heartfelt congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March and to thank you for organizing this debate on the fourth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) (S/2010/135). My delegation extends its appreciation to the Secretary-General for that comprehensive and well-coordinated report. We also thank him for his excellent analysis of the current situation in Sierra Leone, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1886 (2009), which mandated him to submit a report on the activities of UNIPSIL every six months.

I also take this opportunity to convey my gratitude to members of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration, and especially to its Chair, Ambassador John McNee, for his outstanding leadership and for his lucid statement this morning. My gratitude also goes to the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, for his productive and inspiring briefing today and the skilful manner with which he is handling matters in Sierra Leone. On behalf of my delegation, I extend thanks and appreciation to the Peacebuilding Commission and the Fund for their determined and untiring efforts to keep the process in full gear.

As we meet to consider the review of the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Mission in Sierra Leone — a process designed to lead us to another extension of the UNIPSIL mandate for twelve months — I am gratified to note that significant progress is being made to combat daunting challenges facing the nation. The Government remains fully committed to pursuing efforts aimed at consolidating peace and promoting sustained economic growth.

We concur with many of the issues raised by the Secretary-General in the report before us. Laudable progress has been made in the Government's commitment to promote good governance, as evidenced by the strategic framework and concerted actions that the Government continues to take to facilitate the promotion of human rights, gender equality, decentralization, and transparency and accountability in government, and the crackdown on corruption, drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime.

The Government is also determined to establish a culture of political tolerance among the country's main political parties. These measures have led to a relatively peaceful political climate, one favourable for investments and improvement in the conduct of trade and commerce throughout the country. The joint communiqué signed by the two main political parties — the opposition Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and

the ruling All People's Congress (APC) — in April last year continues to encourage peaceful coexistence and dialogue among the main political parties, despite periodic incidents of minor clashes between the supporters.

The recent appointment of the former SLPP Minister for Information and Communication, Professor Septimus Kaikai, as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the newly constituted independent national broadcaster, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, is a manifestation of the Government's commitment to political tolerance and the building of a strong democratic communications system. Sierra Leone also boasts today of having one of the most vibrant and independent media systems, with over 20 registered newspapers representing all shades of political and social persuasion. The present climate of press freedom in Sierra Leone is promoting open and inclusive dialogue about the future of the country.

As already mentioned by the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, the Government has over the past months demonstrated its commitment to ensuring transparent and accountable governance by dismissing from service two more cabinet ministers and a number of public officials, including the Commissioner-General of the National Revenue Authority, after they were accused of corruption and abuse of office by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

President Ernest Bai Koroma remains committed to the pledge he took on his assumption of office in 2007 that there would be no sacred cows in Government and that any minister or official found wanting in moral probity in the handling of the country's meagre resources would be relieved of his or her position and also made to refund whatever he or she misappropriated, in addition to facing legal action. The Anti-Corruption Commission is relentless in its enforcement of the 2008 anti-corruption laws, which are considered to be among the toughest in Africa. In recognition of the Government's acknowledgement that corruption is a major threat to economic growth and prosperity, the Anti-Corruption Commission has instituted 15 successful prosecutions and recovered over 2 billion leones from stiff fines imposed on perpetrators, and as a result Sierra Leone moved up 12 places in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index for 2009.

During the period under review, the Government completed the Bumbuna hydroelectric project, which, in addition to restoring power to a nation that has been in darkness for over a decade, holds the potential of providing much-needed impetus to socio-economic improvement and improving the quality of life of the people.

The Government has also taken strong measures to improve security. Joint police-military patrols under the Military Assistance to Civil Power Act have been stepped up to tackle the recent spate of armed robberies in the city. That has helped to improve the security situation considerably.

The Government, in its continued efforts to give relevance to the joint communique signed last year by the two main political parties, continues to take effective measures to ensure that the injustices of the past that led to the destructive 11-year war do not regain a foothold in the society. In a further attempt to get to the root causes of the clashes between the SLPP and APC in Freetown last year, the Government has established an Independent Review Panel, composed of members nominated by both the SLPP and APC, to further investigate the clashes. The panel is presently in session and on conclusion of its sittings will present its recommendations to the Government on measures needed to forestall a recurrence.

The showcasing of the Sierra Leone National Action Plan to eradicate gender inequality, discrimination and injustice, which was unveiled at the United Nations two weeks ago during the session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, was another major achievement by the country in addressing the injustices of the past and a giant step towards ensuring that abuse, violence and discrimination against women are no longer tolerated in our society. In addition, the Human Rights Commission has been doing its utmost to monitor and to bring awareness of the human rights situation in the country, especially those of women and children.

The Consultative Group meeting on Sierra Leone held in November in London was meant to foster and advance investor confidence in the country in order to generate wealth and create employment for the youthful population, particularly through a re-energized private sector and implementation of the Agenda for Change. The endorsement of the aid policy

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constitutes one of the major milestones of the Consultative Group meeting, and the Government has reiterated its firm commitment to its full implementation. We remain highly hopeful that partners will endeavour to scale up and deliver on their commitments in a timely and predictable manner.

The Government has made such impressive strides that it also received favourable ranking from the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance for being the most improved country in Africa in the area of governance over the past two years. In addition, a recent World Bank study concluded that standards of governance, political stability and the ability of citizens to hold government accountable has improved more significantly in Sierra Leone than in many other countries around the world.

Despite these significant strides in promoting responsible and responsive governance as well as in accelerating the wheels of socio-economic and political renaissance, the Government is aware of the fact that significant challenges still remain and continue to undermine its best efforts to improve the lives of its people.

One of the thorniest areas that continue to require urgent attention from stakeholders and Sierra Leone's development partners is youth unemployment. A significant percentage of youth continue to be unemployed, and this predicament poses a serious threat to efforts to consolidate peace and stability in Sierra Leone. A Youth Commission has been established, though it is not yet operational. We commend the German Agency for Technical Cooperation — the GTZ — for a pilot project to engage youths in some form of gainful employment in garbage disposal in the capital of Freetown. However, the urgent need for resource mobilization to more meaningfully tackle this nagging problem of youth unemployment cannot be overemphasized.

In this respect, I wish to appeal to our development partners to honour their pledges and provide not only the projected $350 million needed by the Government to implement its Agenda for Change, but other resources and job-creation opportunities required to ameliorate the problem of youth unemployment. My delegation also continues to believe that Sierra Leone's peace and stability still remains at the mercy of subregional socio-political instability — as evidenced by the present political crisis in neighbouring Guinea, which has the potential to spill over into our country.

While the Government continues working with the Joint Drug Interdiction Task Force to make Sierra Leone and the West African subregion drug-free, the narcotic trafficking menace in West Africa and organized cross-border crime remain real threats and require UNIPSIL's continued engagement in Sierra Leone for many more years to come, especially with the fast-approaching 2012 presidential, legislative and local government elections.

Let me conclude by reiterating our gratitude to the United Nations, our bilateral partners and the international community at large for their continued engagement in Sierra Leone to ensure maximum success in our socio-political and economic recovery and the consolidation of peace. Let me take this opportunity to also reassure this body of the determination of the Sierra Leone Government to work cooperatively with the United Nations, our development partners and the international community to ensure that we surmount the many challenges facing us as a nation.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6292

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6292nd meeting

Wednesday, 24 March 2010, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Issoze-Ngondet	(Gabon)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	France	Mr. Araud
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Mugoya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in French*). The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I welcome the presence among us of His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. I also welcome the presence of Mr. Robert Serry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by the Secretary-General, to whom I give the floor.

The Secretary-General. I welcome this opportunity to brief the Security Council at this important juncture in our work for peace in the Middle East.

As members of the Council know, I have just returned from visiting Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, following the meeting of the Quartet in Moscow this past Friday.

Before the Quartet meeting, I had a series of bilateral meetings with the Russian leadership, including President Medvedev and Foreign Minister Lavrov. I thanked the Russian Federation for its enhanced contribution to the United Nations agenda and activities, and we discussed the United Nations-Russian Federation partnership on regional and global issues. While in Moscow, I also signed a joint declaration with the Collective Security Treaty Organization aimed at strengthening cooperation on counter-terrorism, drug trafficking, conflict prevention and other areas.

Tomorrow, I depart for Sirte, in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, to attend the summit of the League of Arab States.

These missions take place amid continuing efforts to start Israeli-Palestinian proximity talks and a crisis of confidence spurred by the announcement by Israel of its intention to advance planning for the construction of 1,600 new settlement units in East Jerusalem.

The statement issued by the Quartet in Moscow reflected strong agreement on all main points.

First, Quartet members stressed the need for proximity talks to move ahead and to become direct negotiations as soon as possible, with the goal of resolving all final status issues within 24 months.

Secondly, the Quartet emphasized that the parties should respect the conditions that made proximity talks possible and act in accordance with international law and the Road Map. This includes a freeze of all settlement activity by Israel and fulfilment of security obligations by the Palestinians. The Quartet condemned the recent Israeli settlement announcement, reaffirmed the international position on Jerusalem, and agreed to closely monitor developments and keep under consideration any additional measures that may be necessary. Both sides were urged to refrain from provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric.

Thirdly, the Quartet expressed strong support for the Palestinian Authority's State-building agenda, which was launched in August last year with the goal of completing preparations for statehood in 24 months.

Fourthly, the Quartet agreed on the need for an immediate easing of the closure affecting Gaza and restated its commitment to a durable solution to the issues of security, unity and crossings, as envisaged in resolution 1860 (2009).

I carried these important messages to the Israeli and Palestinian leaders and their publics. In Ramallah, I met Prime Minister Fayyad and other senior figures. President Abbas was in Jordan recuperating from his recent fall, so I will meet him in Sirte. I was strongly assured of President Abbas's commitment to proximity talks and a negotiated settlement on all core issues. Concern was expressed at changing facts on the ground, which prejudice the outcome of negotiations and undermine trust. The importance of Israel meeting its Road Map obligations — including those to freeze settlements, remove outposts and reopen Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem — was stressed.

The Palestinian authorities emphasized their wish to see a greater Quartet role in defining the endgame, given the desire to avoid past failures. Indirect talks were viewed as a vehicle to achieving progress on

substantive core issues in advance of a direct phase of final negotiations.

Prime Minister Fayyad took me to the Al-Masyoun lookout point, on the border between Area A, which is under Palestinian administration, and Area C, which is under Israeli control. The lookout and the subsequent briefing I received made the Palestinian dilemma quite clear.

Palestinians need to be able to use more of their land for housing, agriculture, industry, water, construction materials and more. Yet, they have limited access to Area C and no role in zoning. Those restrictions prevent Palestinian economic and social development. I could also see the barrier snaking through the West Bank. I have strongly advised the Israeli authorities, while addressing their security concerns, to find a way to further ease the constraints that restrict Palestinian life and risk undermining the eventual viability of a Palestinian State.

Despite these difficulties, the Palestinian Authority is making important gains, becoming more transparent, accountable and effective. I was impressed by the efficiency of the security services and the signs of economic activity. I was also impressed by the Palestinian determination to build positive facts from the ground up as a complement to the political process. Palestinian statehood must become an emerging reality based on legitimate Palestinian rights, positive Palestinian actions and a negotiated political settlement. I confirmed to the Prime Minister the determination of the United Nations country team to continue and expand its support for these State-building efforts. International support remains crucial.

It was also brought to my attention that almost all recent disturbances between Israelis and Palestinians have taken place in areas where Israeli forces are present in Palestinian-populated areas. I received appeals for an end to incursions, the further removal of checkpoints, and more responsibility to be given to Palestinian Authority security forces in Palestinian-populated areas.

We discussed the essential Palestinian commitment to non-violence and legitimate protest in that context. I expressed my concern about Palestinian prisoners and publicly urged Israel to release prisoners, as called for by the Palestinian Authority.

I was deeply dismayed that four Palestinians under the age of 20 were shot and killed by Israeli security forces in the West Bank during my visit. Israeli Defence Minister Barak assured me that Israel would investigate those incidents. I publicly condemned all such violence and stressed the importance of protecting civilians.

I also met with representatives of two families that had been evicted from their homes. I made it clear that all settlement activity is illegal and that inserting settlers into Palestinian communities in Jerusalem is particularly troubling. It leads to tensions and undermines prospects for addressing the final status of Jerusalem. Yesterday's announcement that final approval had been given to build 20 settlement units in Sheikh Jarrah is unacceptable.

In Gaza, I drove nearly a full circuit of the Strip. I saw destroyed houses and poverty, formerly functioning industrial zones and vast greenhouses lying in ruin, and a visible security presence of the de facto authorities. In Khan Younis, I met with a number of civil society and business leaders. They stressed that the closure of Gaza was morally unacceptable and counterproductive. I agree with them. "We are surviving, not living", one said.

I was briefed by United Nations staff and by Gazans on the perilous state of the water and sanitation situation; on difficulties in every sector, from fishing and agriculture to health care and manufacturing; and on the limitations on travel and basic freedoms caused by the closure.

What struck me most were the children, and what worries me most is their future. More than half of Gaza's population is under 18 years of age, and population growth rates are high. The schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East are a symbol of the commitment of the international community to ensuring that Palestinian youth receive an education, as is their right. We need to build more schools, but lack the materials. The only cement available in substantial quantities in Gaza today is smuggled in through tunnels. Those who work with smugglers can build, but the United Nations and others who use legitimate products cannot.

I was pleased to be able to announce in Khan Younis that, after three years of closure, the Israeli Government has now approved the entry of material

required to complete 151 housing units in Khan Younis, carry out a water and sanitation project in Tel El-Sultan and repair the El-Bader flour mill. Israel has also agreed to expand the list of imports to include aluminum and wood. I welcomed that decision, but would like to emphasize that this is only a first and very modest step. One hundred and fifty-one units amount to far less than 1 per cent of the needs in the shelter sector alone, to say nothing of other needs. I have informed Israel that we will come back with more far-reaching proposals.

A rocket fired from Gaza into Israel by radical elements a few days before my visit killed a civilian. During my visit to the region, there were further rocket firings. While in Gaza, I condemned rocket fire and made a public appeal for non-violence and Palestinian unity.

In Israel, I met with President Peres, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defence Minister Barak and other senior officials. My interlocutors stressed that there was no alternative to direct talks if core issues are to be resolved. The Israelis stressed the positive steps taken by Israel, including the call for direct negotiations, the removal of obstacles to movement, the Government's commitment to a two-State solution, and the policy of partial settlement restraint. However, the Prime Minister reiterated that Israel would not freeze construction in settlements in East Jerusalem. I stressed the need for all parties to do everything possible to facilitate proximity talks.

My Israeli interlocutors acknowledged significant progress in the West Bank by the Palestinian Authority and their readiness to do more to enable progress, while also expressing the concern that peaceful protest not turn violent and the importance of restraint on both sides.

I discussed Gaza with all my interlocutors. I called once again for the closure policy to be changed.

I met the parents of Corporal Shalit, who pointed out that their son had been denied the basic right of any prisoner — that of third-party visits.

My interlocutors expressed Israel's frustration with the situation in South Lebanon, where Israel believes that Hizbullah is rearming at an alarming rate. I understand Israel's legitimate security concerns and the importance of addressing them, along with the concerns of all parties, as efforts continue to achieve the implementation of United Nations resolutions on Lebanon. At the same time, I conveyed my belief that a genuine and viable peace process, leading to the end of the Arab-Israel conflict as envisaged in other resolutions of this Council, is the key to long-term stability in the region.

The Israeli Government also raised another regional matter — the Iranian nuclear issue. I share and appreciate Israel's concerns. I noted that there is an international consensus to address this question and that a crucial diplomatic process is under way. I emphasized the need to approach the matter in this context.

At the Arab League summit in Sirte, I will brief Arab leaders about the Quartet meeting and my visit to the region. I will urge them to support the proximity talks. It is crucial for the Arab countries to help create a favourable atmosphere in which the talks can succeed.

Let me close by stressing four key messages that emerged from my visit. First, there is no alternative to negotiations for a comprehensive and just resolution of the conflict, and no alternative to addressing all the core issues for a two-State solution. Negotiations must start without delay.

Secondly, we must not let negotiations be disrupted by provocations. No doubt, there will be tests. The parties themselves must take steps to meet obligations and build trust. Extremists and spoilers must see that the parties are determined to press ahead.

Thirdly, the situation on the ground is crucial. There have been too many negative facts being created on the ground, and these need to stop. We need more positive facts, such as calm and restraint, reconstruction in Gaza and transformative change in the West Bank.

Fourthly, while peace is in the hands of the parties themselves, the international community must continue to play a crucial role — supportive, insistent and, at times, catalytic.

I felt a strong consensus on the way forward in Moscow, and a determination to review progress collectively and to work more closely with both parties and the region, including the Arab League. Regional support for the peace effort and a regional approach to peace as a whole are both crucial. I will carry these messages to Libya.

Let me assure the Council of my firm commitment, and that of the United Nations as a whole, to this agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.